PROTECTED AREAS –

BALANCING THE ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

YPAS BULLETIN 1: ECOREGION REPRESENTATION
OCTOBER 2001

Yukon
Government

NATIONAL COMMITMENT

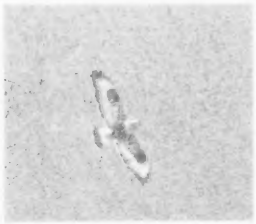
Canada is part of a world-wide effort to protect the earth's biodiversity, the "Biodiversity Convention."
"Biodiversity", short for biological diversity, means the whole range of living things, from bacteria to whales, from lichen to lodgepole pine, and how they interact with each other and their environment.

In November 1992, the Yukon, and all the other provinces and territories, signed a "Statement of Commitment to Complete Canada's Network of Protected Areas." Part of this commitment is to protect a representative part of every eco-region in Canada.

The Yukon Protected Areas Strategy (YPAS), developed over two years with the involvement of First Nations, non-governmental organisations and people in the territory, is the process the Yukon will use to fulfill its commitment to representing its ecoregions. It was completed in 1998, and is now being implemented.

ECOREGIONS

An "ecoregion" is an area of land made up of a unique combination of physical features (mountains, soils, wetlands, climate, etc) and wildlife. Scientists have mapped Canada into more than 400 ecoregions. The Yukon has 23.



For example, the Liard Basin ecoregion around Watson Lake in southeastern Yukon is a productive northern boreal forest. Lodgepole pine and spruce are the predominant tree species, providing habitat for moose and a wide variety of songbirds.

In contrast, the Yukon Coastal Plain ecoregion in northern Yukon has very few trees. Instead there are low tundra plants growing over permafrost, and the typical wildlife of the tundra – barren ground caribou, ptarmigan and long-tailed jaeger.

The map shows the Yukon's 23 ecoregions, most of which overlap with our neighbours.

Liard Basin ecoregion

Yukon Coastal Plain ecoregion

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WHAT YPAS DOES

The primary aim of the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy (YPAS) is to protect one representative part of each ecoregion in the Yukon. These are called "Goal 1 areas."

Some of this work is already done. Seven of Yukon's 23 ecoregions already have adequate areas protected. The existing parks and protected areas of Ivvavik, Vuntut, Tombstone and Fishing Branch represent five of the northern ecoregions. Kluane National Park represents two southwestern ecoregions.

Three other ecoregions have more than 90% of their areas in BC or the NWT. These will not be represented in the Yukon. This leaves 13 Yukon ecoregions needing representation. Land protected through Land Claim settlements will contribute to this ecoregion representation.

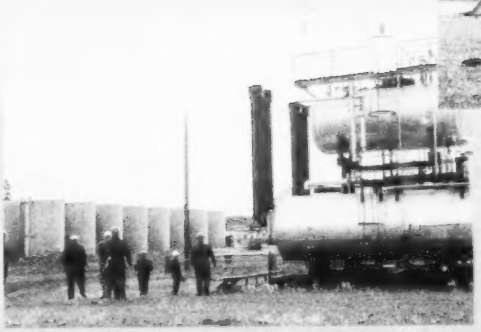
AREAS OF INTEREST FOR GOAL 1 PROTECTION

The first step towards protecting a Goal 1 area is to study the whole ecoregion to choose an "area of interest," an area which researchers recommend as the best choice for ecoregion representation, while avoiding, wherever possible, existing legal third party interests, areas with high resource potential for industrial activity, and critical access corridors. Cabinet reviews and must give final approval to each area of interest.

All remaining ecoregions will have one area of interest announced by spring 2003. Following further study, Cabinet will review and approve the final Goal 1 protected area. The final boundaries must be inside the area of interest. Once all remaining ecoregions are represented, YPAS Goal 1 work is finished.

No new industrial development is allowed in a Goal 1 area. Once the areas of interest are announced, industry will know the rest of the ecoregion is open for potential development.

(Please see Bulletin #2 " Choosing a YPAS Goal 1 Area" for more details.)



A BALANCED APPROACH

YPAS was set up with a great deal of public involvement. People from industry, tourism, environmental and conservation groups, and First Nations, municipal, territorial and federal governments have all had input into the process.

In choosing a Goal 1 area, many different values are considered. An area's ecological values and its potential for industry, tourism, recreation, etc. is assessed. YPAS will keep a balance between the environment and the economy.

Local issues are considered as possible areas of interest are researched. Cabinet makes the final selection.

Once the area of interest is decided, a Planning Team is set up to continue the YPAS process. The team includes representatives from the local First Nation, Renewable Resource Council, municipality and the Yukon government. YPAS will consult with the Regional Land Use Planning Commission, where it is in place.

The Planning Team reviews the assessments and recommends an area, within the area of interest, for further study, and eventually the team recommends the final boundaries of the protected area to Cabinet. Encouraging public participation is an important part of the team's work. Cabinet reviews and approves the final boundaries.

A planning team then prepares a draft management plan for Cabinet's review. Once approved, this plan sets out the rules for administering the area.

For more information, please see the other two YPAS bulletins, "Choosing a YPAS Goal 1 Area" and "Third Party Interests." You can also access the website at ***www.renres.gov.yk.ca*** *and click on "Protected Areas and Special Places," or call 667-5460, or 1-800-661-0408 extension 5460. To ask for more copies of these bulletins, call 667-5361.*

PROTECTED AREAS –

BALANCING THE ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

YPAS BULLETIN 2: CHOOSING A YPAS GOAL 1 AREA
OCTOBER 2001

Yukon
Government

YPAS GOAL 1 AREAS

The primary aim of the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy (YPAS) is to protect one representative part of each ecoregion in the Yukon. These are called "Goal 1 areas."

The first step towards making a Goal 1 protected area is to choose an "area of interest" for that ecoregion *(see Bulletin # 1 for details)*. The final protected area will be inside the area of interest. It must represent the ecoregion and satisfy the ecological needs of YPAS, but where possible avoid existing industrial third party interests and areas that are significant to industry. Important future access routes will be preserved.

When choosing an area of interest, YPAS uses well-accepted, Canada-wide methods and standards for assessing ecological and resource values. YPAS also considers the area's socio-cultural values.

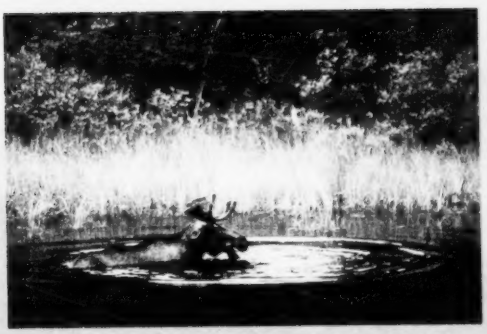
ECOLOGICAL VALUES

A Goal 1 area needs to be:

- **representative of the ecoregion.**
The area should include the ecological characteristics that are typical of the ecoregion.

- **ecologically viable.**
The area must be able to stay healthy by itself in the long term, and evolve naturally over time.

- **natural.**
The area should be in a largely natural state with few human-caused disturbances.



RESOURCE VALUES

Areas with high resource potential for industry will be avoided where possible in selecting areas for protection. The area's potential for future use by each industry is assessed using accepted industry standards.

YPAS will also avoid existing industrial third party interests, such as timber concessions, mineral claims, oil & gas dispositions, and hydro sites, where at all possible.

The possible impact on the following industries is assessed, using the tools listed below, before final boundaries are decided. Different steps involve different levels of detail.

• forestry.
A regional and detailed forest inventory is performed.

• mineral development.
Regional and detailed mineral resource assessments are performed, including the use of geological maps, "Yukon Minfile," geochemical surveys, geophysical surveys, and field work if necessary.

• oil & gas development.
The Oil & Gas Resources Branch prepares maps ranking probable hydrocarbon potential. Seismic studies and test holes may be used as needed. The results of industry's drilling programs are used when available.

• hydro and wind power.
Reconnaissance and feasibility studies have been conducted and sites ranked as to hydro potential. Possible transmission corridors are noted.

• agriculture.
Soil and climate are studied as part of the environmental assessments, and agricultural potential is assessed.

• access.
Regional transportation needs are identified, to ensure practical means of future land access.

YPAS also assesses the possible impact on businesses like tourism, outfitting, trapping and commercial fishing.

SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES

YPAS assesses other values too. Areas may have recreational, cultural, historical, or spiritual significance. Areas may offer opportunities for education and research. Affected local and stakeholder groups are invited to submit comments. The effects, good and bad, that a new protected area could have on the people who live nearby are also considered.

A new protected area could enhance opportunities for recreational activities like camping, hiking, and sport fishing and hunting.

MULTIPLE ACCOUNTS ANALYSIS

All of these assessments are put together using a tool called multiple accounts analysis.

Multiple accounts analysis compares all the possible areas of interest. This makes it easier to see how the various possibilities will impact all the values- ecological, resource and socio-cultural. It helps the departments make the best choice of an area of interest to recommend for that ecoregion.

The departments of Renewable Resources, Economic Development, Tourism, Community and Transportation Services, and the federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs are all involved in these assessments. Once the departments' analyses are complete and considered, the best area of interest for each ecoregion is recommended to Cabinet.

When the area of interest is announced, the assessments will be made public so that people will know why that area was chosen.

SIZE

Each ecoregion is unique. There is no "one size fits all" answer to how large an area is needed for Goal 1 protection. YPAS has no cap or floor (maximum or minimum) on the amount of land that will be protected in each ecoregion, or in total. The size of each protected area will be based on a scientific evaluation.

For more information, please see the other two YPAS bulletins, "Ecoregion Representation" and "Third Party Interests." You can also access the website at ***www.renres.gov.yk.ca*** *and click on "Protected Areas and Special Places," or call 667-5460, or 1-800-661-0408 extension 5460. To ask for more copies of these bulletins, call 667-5361.*

PROTECTED AREAS –

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YPAS BULLETIN 3: THIRD PARTY INTERESTS
OCTOBER 2001

Yukon
Government

INDUSTRIAL THIRD PARTY INTERESTS

YPAS will avoid existing industrial third party interests, as well as areas with high resource potential for industry, wherever possible. Where they cannot be avoided, all third party legal rights will be respected.

Resource assessments are an important part of choosing YPAS Goal 1 areas *(see Bulletin # 2 for more details)*. The probability of an area being important for development in the future is carefully considered when choosing a YPAS area. No new industrial development is allowed in a YPAS Goal 1 area.

All 13 Yukon ecoregions that still need protection will have one "area of interest" announced by spring 2003. Land protected through Land Claim settlements will contribute to this ecoregion representation. *(See Bulletin #1 for an explanation of areas of interest)*. The future Goal 1 protected area will be inside the area of interest, so industry will know that this land is being considered for protection. No other YPAS Goal 1 area will be set up in that ecoregion. This will help give certainty for planning for the future.

FIRST NATIONS' RIGHTS

First Nations' rights under First Nation Final Agreements will not be affected by YPAS.

Protected areas established through YPAS will be consistent with requirements under Yukon First Nation Final Agreements. Special Management Areas established under a Yukon First Nation Final Agreement are not affected by YPAS.

However, where a SMA under a Final Agreement meets YPAS needs for that ecoregion, no other Goal 1 area will be set aside in that ecoregion. If it does not completely satisfy Goal 1 requirements, its contribution to ecoregion representation will be considered.

YPAS will work to identify local issues and interests when choosing an area of interest. The local First Nation and Renewable Resource Council are invited to have a representative on each Planning Team.

NON-INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS AND RECREATION

"Non-industrial business" includes businesses like outfitting, trapping, wilderness tourism and commercial fishing.

Existing non-industrial and recreational uses will continue. Anyone who hunts, traps, fishes, or runs an outfitting or wilderness tourism business now, can continue to do so.

Potential restrictions on these activities would be based on public health and public safety. The Wildlife Act and Umbrella Final Agreement will apply to these activities inside parks in the same way that they apply to all other Yukon land.

ACCESS

Access is a very important issue for everyone. Different groups have very different viewpoints on what access (if any) should be allowed to, and through, YPAS Goal 1 areas.

Access can mean anything from an overgrown hiking trail to a paved highway. It also refers to airstrips, landings by float planes and helicopters, and river and lake access by boats and canoes.

YPAS will respect existing legal rights of access.

If a YPAS Goal 1 protected area blocks the only reasonable land access route to areas beyond its boundary, then the need for future land access will be addressed. This could be accomplished by establishing a Goal 2 corridor which allows for limited development.

The government is actively considering this complex issue and making policy regarding the various and conflicting needs and wishes.

For more information, please see the other two YPAS bulletins, "Ecoregion Representation" and "Choosing a YPAS Goal 1 Area." You can also access the website at ***www.renres.gov.yk.ca*** *and click on "Protected Areas and Special Places," or call 667-5460, or 1-800-661-0408 extension 5460. To ask for more copies of these bulletins, call 667-5361.*